

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 07336

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, OTRA

SUBJECT: HMG NUCLEAR REACTOR CHOICE: DOUB VISIT

REF: STATE 112431, LONDON 7277, 7172

1. COMMISSIONER DOUB'S VISIT CAME AT PROPITIOUS MOMENT IN VIEW OF RECENT PRESS STATEMENTS BY SIR ALAN COTTRELL, FORMER CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER, AND LORD HINTON, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD, CALLING ATTENTION TO ALLEGED SAFETY RISKS OF CHOOSING AMERICAN DESIGN LWRS.

2. IN MEETING WITH SEC STATE FOR ENERGY ERIC VARLEY, HE ASSURED DOUB THAT NO MATTER WHAT HMG DECISION MIGHT BE, ACCEPTABILITY ON GROUNDS OF SAFETY OF LWRS OR OTHER NUCLEAR REACTORS WOULD NOT BE BROUGHT INTO QUESTION. VARLEY SAID THERE WOULD BE A CONTINUING BRITISH NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM BUT THERE MAY BE SOME ADJUSTMENT IN ITS PROPOSED SIZE AND TIMING. VARLEY STATED FINAL DECISION MAY BE DELAYED ANOTHER 3-4 WEEKS, INTIMATING THAT HIGH LEVEL OF PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC CONCERN EXPRESSED MUST BE CAREFULLY WEIGHED BY HMG.

2. IN SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS WITH CHIEF NUCLEAR INSPECTOR E. C. WILLIAMS, HE ANTICIPATED THAT PUBLIC HEARING THIS MONTH ON PROPOSED REACTOR SITE AT TORNESS, SCOTLAND COULD TURN OUT TO BE TEST CASE OF UK APPROACH TO ENTIRE NUCLEAR SITING ISSUE' WILLIAMS OBSERVED HIS INSPECTOR-CONFIDENTIAL

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ATE TEAM WOULD TRY TO CONFINE SCOPE OF HEARING TO ACCEPT-

ABILITY OF FULL RANGE OF THERMAL REACTORS RATHER THAN PERMIT DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL REACTOR TYPES SUCH AS PWR, AGR, SGHWR.

3. COMMENT: IT APPEARS HMG HAS AS MATTER OF POLITICAL JUDGMENT DECIDED TO DELAY ONCE AGAIN MAKING A FINAL DECISION ON REACTOR CHOICE. GIVEN RECENT PRESS COVERAGE OF RENEWED ATTACKS ON LWR SAFETY, THIS MAY BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUPPORTERS OF AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY.

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